



SHROPSHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD Report

Meeting Date	19/01/23			
Title of Paper	Vaping and young people update			
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Which Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy priorities does this paper address? Please tick all that apply	Children & Young People	x	Joined up working	x
	Mental Health		Improving Population Health	x
	Healthy Weight & Physical Activity		Working with and building strong and vibrant communities	
	Workforce		Reduce inequalities (see below)	
What inequalities does this paper address?	Health inequalities related to smoking and the use of vapes			

Paper content - Please expand content under these headings or attach your report ensuring the three headings are included.

1. Executive Summary

Based on the recommendations of the 'Khan Report: making smoking obsolete' presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in September 2022, a workstream has been developed to address the issue of vaping among children and young people (CYP). This is because whilst the Khan Report recommends the use of vaping as a popular and effective smoking cessation tool which will reduce the preventable illness, death and inequality associated with smoking, the number of CYP taking up vaping is nationally measured to be increasing. Anecdotal evidence from Shropshire is that vaping among CYP is increasing, particularly in schools and there are concerns of a link with exploitation risk. In the short and medium term, evidence to date suggests that vaping poses only a small fraction of the risks of smoking. However, vaping is not risk-free and its long-term effects still unclear. It is not recommended for children and young people. Whilst a popular and effective quit tool for smokers, the advice is that those who do not vape should not smoke.

In response, members of the Health Improvement team in Public Health have created two Task and Finish (T&F) groups to respond to the issue of vaping among CYP in Shropshire. These T&F groups focus on two core elements; i) local evidence of the scale and characteristics of the problem of vaping among CYP, and ii) the communication with CYP, parents, teachers and others who work with them around the risks of vaping. This is in the context of national and regional work which is progressing in this area and is expected to facilitate local efforts.

This report is intended as an update for information to the Health and Wellbeing Board outlining progress with this workstream to date.

2. Recommendations

The HWBB is recommended to receive this report for information and recognition of work progress to date.

3. Report

- Rationale

In September 2022, a paper on the 'Khan Report: making smoking obsolete' and its implications for Shropshire was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board. This paper, as well as outlining the burden of smoking and its effect on health inequalities for Shropshire, summarised the main recommendations set out by the Khan Report for achieving the government's goal of reducing smoking to 5% of the adult population by 2030. One of the major recommendations is the use of vapes (or e-cigarettes) as a proven effective smoking cessation tool. This raised the question of the risk of vaping among CYP, whereby local anecdotal experience describes a general increase among CYP who are vaping. The concern of the harms of vaping for CYP, and how this is affected by the message of the suitability of vapes for adult smokers, led to the development of a workstream within the Health Improvement Team to address vaping among CYP in Shropshire. This workstream focuses on two core elements; i) the local data of the problem of vaping among CYP, and ii) the communication with CYP, parents, teachers and others who work with them around the risks of vaping.

- Background

What is vaping?

Vaping is the use of a 'vape' which is a battery-powered device that heats a solution, usually but not always containing nicotine. This produces a vapour which is inhaled by the user. Vapes do not contain tobacco and do not involve burning, therefore do not produce tar or carbon monoxide-two of the most harmful elements of tobacco smoking. As a relatively new product, the long-term impacts of vaping are still unknown. In the UK, approximately 3.2 million adults use vapes, the vast majority of whom are smokers or ex-smokers (39.8% and 58.9% respectively)¹. Among current smokers who use vapes, the most common reasons for vaping are to cut down or quit smoking as well as to save money.

What is the problem among young people?

A national survey conducted by ASH (Action on smoking and health) published in 2022 monitored trends in vaping among young people aged 11-18 years between 2013-2022. The proportion of 11–17-year-olds who have ever used vapes has increased from 3.8% in 2013 to 15.8% in 2022². As of 2022, current use of vapes (including occasional and regular vaping) is 8.6% in 2022, compared to 4.8% in 2020. This is compared to tobacco smoking which is 6% in 2022 compared to 6.7% in 2020³. The use of vapes is considerably higher among those over the age of 16 years. The prevalence of vaping in 2022 is greater than the prevalence of smoking in young people for the first time.

Most young people who have never smoked are also not vaping-only 1.7% of non-smoking young people report at least monthly use of vapes². The reason for vaping among non-smokers is largely experimental, and among smokers more likely to be due to enjoyment, as a quit tool or because of vape addiction. The proportion of young people who perceive vaping to be equally or more harmful than tobacco smoking is increasing, with only 42% of young people believing they are less harmful than cigarettes².

What is the evidence for the benefits and harms of vaping?

Vapes are the most popular smoking cessation tool for tobacco smokers in England¹. Recent evidence shows with high certainty that people are more likely to stop smoking for at least 6 months when they quit using nicotine-containing vapes compared to standard nicotine replacement therapy (NRT, e.g., patches, gums)⁴.

Tobacco smoking is the most important cause of preventable illness and death as well as health inequalities in England and kills up to 2 out of 3 long term users. Vaping provides significantly lower exposure to harmful substances linked to cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular conditions than smoking. There is similar or higher (in the case of some cancer-causing chemicals) exposure to harmful substances from vaping compared to not using nicotine products at all³.

Whilst not risk-free, the latest research shows that in the short- and medium-term vaping carries a small fraction of the risk of tobacco smoking³. Given vaping is a relatively new phenomenon, there is still unclear evidence of its long-term effects on health. This means that, particularly for CYP, the precautionary principle should apply whereby caution should be applied where there is uncertainty of health risks. This means vaping is not recommended for children and young people and the general advice is that whilst it is an effective smoking quit tool, those who do not smoke should not vape.

- Objectives and Scope of Action

This paper outlines the action taken by the Health Improvement Team to bring together stakeholders from across the council and health services to address two main priorities identified for tackling the problem of youth vaping in Shropshire.

The first priority is related to the need for local data on the prevalence and pattern of vaping among young people in Shropshire. The main sources of evidence on the problem of youth vaping are from national data using a relatively small sample size (2,613 in 2022). Anecdotal evidence from those who work with CYP in Shropshire describe seeing many children using vapes especially at school. There are also concerns that vaping can act as a 'gateway' to exploitation. Local data will inform public health and partners of its scale and characteristics of the problem which will inform both communication and health promotion activities.

The second priority is to communicate with young people and those that work with CYP about vaping. This is particularly important given the often confusing or mixed messaging around vaping given the emerging and often uncertain evidence of its risks (particularly for long-term effects) and its contrasting benefits as a smoking cessation tool. The particular aim is to identify key communication messages as well as mechanisms for providing information and clarity around the absolute and relative risks of vaping in young people compared to smoking, without undermining the importance of vaping as a way to reduce smoking-related illness, death and inequalities. It is crucial that any key messages are evidence-based, particularly given the uncertainty around vaping and its long-term effects, and therefore we will be drawing on national and international best practice and guidance for local delivery.

- Action to date

Two Task and Finish groups (1) Local Data, 2) Communication) were established to address the two main priorities described above.

<u>Local Data Group</u>	<u>Communication Group</u>
Key stakeholders identified and invited to join, includes public health, CYP and substance use services, education, school nursing, public	Key stakeholders identified and invited to join, includes public health, CYP and substance use

health intelligence, research, trading standards & licensing	services, education, school nursing, trading standards & licensing
<p>Established priorities, main aims and scope of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing or emerging data collection/gathering efforts in the region to identify whether targeted local data collection is required Once need for local data is established, develop a research approach for Shropshire which builds on other methods, includes accessing survey questions and methodology from ASH Undertake data collection and report on findings as required Use local data and/or findings from local research to input into the work of the communication group 	<p>Established priorities, main aims and scope of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key communications messages based on evidence provided at regional and/or national level, including resources for communications Once key messages are identified, establish mechanisms for dissemination and engagement Implement a Communications Plan for Vaping across Shropshire
Existing evidence for vaping summarised and shared	Existing evidence for vaping summarised and shared
<p>Identification of existing local and regional data sources, potential sources of routine/ad-hoc data sources within and out with public health (e.g., from drug and alcohol, policy, NHS services)</p> <p>Identification of potential academic partners or academic project outputs</p>	<p>Identification and appraisal of existing resources for communications with children and young people, including national and international sources</p> <p><i>NB: A national OHID vaping communications resource is currently in development-due January 2023 (delayed from November 2022)</i></p>
<p>Clarification and appraisal of existing national/international surveys (ASH, ITC) for potential local application</p> <p>Prioritisation of key data points from existing surveys thought to be most relevant to local context (e.g., prevalence of current use, source, reasons for use)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned Action 	
<u>Local Data Group</u>	<u>Communication Group</u>
<p>Undertake research on CYP vaping in Shropshire, to identify, collect, analyse and disseminate local data for informing the work of the Communication Group and other health promotion work</p>	<p>Identify key high-level messages from existing evidence and resources that will formulate the basis for communications to CYP and to professionals and practitioners.</p> <p>Examples could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -If you smoke tobacco, vaping is far less risky. Vaping poses only a fraction of the risk of smoking in the short and medium term -Vaping is one of the most effective and popular tools for quitting smoking -Those who do not smoke should not vape -Vaping is not for children -There are known and unknown risks of vaping
Next meeting planned for February 2023	Identification of existing mechanisms for communications including for CYP, parents, schools, children's services etc

	Development of a communication strategy based on existing and new resources
	Next meeting to be confirmed in January pending communications regarding OHID resources

The work of the two T&F groups will continue but discussion to date has indicated the need to explore developments elsewhere within the region, nationally and internationally before taking 'next steps'. For example, it is understood that other authorities are planning to undertake population surveys and as such it makes sense to learn from their work before finalising local plans. In addition, a regional 'position statement' on vaping is being developed through the regional Directors of Public Health group and this too could be helpful in informing (and potentially standardising) communications across local authorities particularly with the awaited OHID resources.

In addition to this work undertaken by the T&F teams, it is important to also note the work of the council's trading standards team. The Council's Trading Standards Team has and continues to prioritise enforcement activities aimed at tackling the supply of illegal nicotine inhaling products (vapes) and to assess whether retailers who stock vapes (illegal or legitimate) are willing to sell to children. A number of enforcement visits and age restricted sales test purchasing operations have been undertaken across the county to a range of retail premises. This has led to the identification and seizure of 1044 illegal vaping products and 3 sales of vapes to children. The underage sales are the subject of further investigation to determine the appropriate level of enforcement and sanction. The enforcement visits and test purchasing operations were conducted following proactive intelligence gathering and implemented through the local Trading Standards tasking process in response to national, regional and local emerging trends, which had been identified through the Trading Standards tactical assessment. The work continues to enable the Trading Standards Team to develop a greater understanding of the local market, and this is ongoing.

Together, the ongoing work from the Data and Communications T&F groups as well as trading standards presents a multi-pronged approach to dealing with the issue of vaping in children and young people in Shropshire. A further update on progress on this work programme will be provided on the request of the H&WBB.

References

1. South East Tobacco Control Network; South East of England Position Statement on Electronic Cigarettes; 2021
2. ASH; Use of e-cigarettes (vapes) among young people in Great Britain; 2022
3. OHID; Nicotine vaping in England:2022 evidence update main findings [Nicotine vaping in England: 2022 evidence update main findings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/108414/nicotine_vaping_in_england_2022_evidence_update_main_findings.pdf)
4. Hartmann-Boyce J, Lindson N, Butler AR et al. Electronic cigarettes for smoking cessation. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews; 2022; 11(CD010216)

Risk assessment and opportunities appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)

Tobacco smoking is the most important cause of health inequalities. Vaping and tobacco smoking are linked given vaping is a recognised and encourage smoking cessation tool. Reducing vaping among children and young people is important for reducing the impact of both known and unknown health risks of vaping (precautionary principal). Communicating the relative and absolute risks of vaping adequately are essential to minimising the significant risks of tobacco smoking in children and young people, as well as adults.

Financial implications

(Any financial implications of note)

There are no current financial implications to be noted. However, the progress of this work and final outcomes are as yet undefined and therefore financial implications continue to be under review

Climate Change Appraisal as applicable	Disposal vapes are a particular environmental pollutant and increasing in popularity. Action to reduce vaping, particularly of disposal vapes which are popular among young people, will reduce the environmental impact of these products.	
Where else has the paper been presented?	System Partnership Boards	
	Voluntary Sector	
	Other	
List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)		
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) or your organisational lead e.g. Exec lead or Non-Exec/Clinical Lead (List of Council Portfolio holders can be found at this link: https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=130) Councillor Cecilia Motley, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social care, Public Health and Communities		
Appendices		